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UNITED NATIONS TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS DECADE IN AFRICA (1978-1988)

PART C

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE AFRICAN SATELLITE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM AND RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROJECTS OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION (1980-1983)

(Reference made to paragraph 7 a (i) of part A of the report)

Appropriate Telecommunications for the Development of Africa

Introduction

1. It may be recalled that at its twelth session the Conference of Ministers requested in its resolutions 278 (XII) and 281 (XII) that ECA, OAU and ITU should organize studies to establish the feasibility of suitable Regional satellite communication system(s) to complement the PANAFTEL network and to cater for broadcasting communication needs of the continent. The OAU Council of Ministers also subsequently adopted resolution CM/Res 506 (XXVII) on the development of a regional satellite communication system.

2. Following on these resolutions a Regional seminar was organized on September 27 to October 1, 1976 jointly by ECA, OAU, UNESCO and ITU, in Addis Ababa on "Regional Co-operation for Education and Development in Africa Using Space Communication". The ensuing recommendation from this Regional Seminar for full studies on the possible exploitation of space communications technology for education and development in the Region was subsequently endorsed by the thirteenth session and fourth meeting of the Conference of Ministers in its resolution 310 (XIII). In this resolution, the Conference also called on ECA, OAU and ITU and UNESCO to mobilize resources for setting up, with minimum delay, a working group of experts to formulate a study of the possible Regional Satellite Communication System for Africa.

3. On the basis of a preliminary study conducted as part of the preparatory studies for the first phase programme of the United Nations Transport and Communication decade in Africa (UNTACDA) a project entitled "the feasibility study on the African Regional Satellite System" (project No. RAF-01) was included in the UNTACDA phase I programme.

Current situation

4. Following the adoption of the UNTACDA first phase programme of action, a number of agencies embarked on studies jointly and severally. By early 1981 three separate studies were discernible:

i) joint ECA/OAU/ITU/UNESCO prefeasibility study on a possible African Regional Satellite System;

ii) the African Regional Telecommunication Satellite (AFROSAT) study by the Pan African Telecommunication Union (PATU) and

iii) the regional telecommunication satellite system in Africa (AFSAT) study by the African Postal and Telecommunication Union (acronym, UAPT).

5. There was a fourth study this time on rural telecommunications using all appropriate technologies which had satellite communication technology as one of the technologies to be examined. This project study was sponsored by ITU and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

6. In August 1980 the situation was such that the Executive Secretary of ECA felt the need for a determined effort to harmonize and integrate all these related studies in order to avoid wastage of resources, preserve the good image of Africa with possible financing sources and ensure ready funding for a single project study. A meeting called in October 1980 by ECA as lead agency for UNTACDA (the first phase programme of action of which included the pre-feasibility study on the African Regional Satellite System) resulted in the merging of the two joint projects, namely the joint ECA/OAU/ITU/UNESCO study and the joint ITU/German project study. The merged projects took on the title of Appropriate Modern Telecommunication Technology for Integrated Rural Development (AMIT/IRD). It combined the UNTACDA Satellite project of SAP-01 and Rural Telecommunication Survey project TEP-05. PATU and UAPT were unable to participate in the meeting.

7. In March 1981, the second conference of Ministers, Transport, Communications and Planning organized by ECA considered the issues and in its resolution ECA/UNTACDA/Res.81/.7 called on "ECA, OAU, African inter-governmental organizations and the specialized agencies of OAU and UN involved in studies on the African Regional Satellite Communications System to work out practical arrangements for harmonizing and combining all proposed and on-going studies into a single project". ECA has were made in October 1981, at the instance of PATU to work out these arrangements for harmonizing on-going projects with partial success.

8. In March 27-29 1982 a meeting of inter-governmental experts was organized by OAU, ECA, ITU, UNESCO and PATU as the inter-agency committee steering the AMIT/IRD project to examine the report on the prefeasibility study of the project.

9. At this meeting, which was attended by 101 representatives of 43 member countries and of a large number of observer organizations and governments, the report on UAPT's preliminary study on the AFSAT project was also presented. The AFSAT study covers only the francophone countries which are members of UAPT and Zaire. Consequent upon the meeting's deliberations on the AMIT/IRD pre-feasibility study, UAPT's preliminary AFSAT study which was indicated to have been co-ordinated since 1981 with PATU's preliminary study on its AFROSAT project, it has now been agreed to establish an inter-agency co-ordination committee comprising ECA, OAU, ITU, UNESCO, ASU, PATU, UAPT and the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (acronym URTNA) with responsibilities among others to harmonize and integrate all on-going pre-feasibility study projects and activities such as AMIT/IRD, AFROSAT and AFSAT in order to make one single study on appropriate telecommunications for the development of Africa.

10. The recommendations of the inter-governmental experts meeting are to be found in annex I to this report.

Follow-up activities

11. It needs to be noted that after the various pre-feasibility and preliminary studies, a detailed feasibility study covering among others, the engineering, financial, organizational and management aspects of the project "appropriate telecommunications for the development Africa", may require to be undertaken.

The detailed studies will involve all member countries interested in the project and the service areas to be covered include telecommunications for inter urban and intra-African rural connections; radio and television broadcasting. The terms of reference for the detailed study are to lay emphasis on the provision of services to rural and remote areas where the majority of the population lives.

12. Finance for funding all the activities of the detailed study will also have to be found. At present it is understood that a number of member countries of the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) as well as the CEC itself are ready to consider possible financing for a single project study resulting from the merging of AMIT/IRD, ATDA and AFROSAT projects. They will need however to be assured of the interest of African governments in the detailed feasibility study.

13. The inter-governmental experts meeting has therefore requested that the ECA Conference of Ministers may be requested to consider the experts recommendation as detailed out in para. 7 of annex I. and give its endorsement, in view of the fact that the next Conference of Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning, the appropriate and relevant legislative authority concerned is not due to meet until April 1983 and that financing of the detailed study project at this stage, may not be readily available for commitment to the project beyond the current year.

14. The inter-agency co-ordination committee composed of OAU, ECA, ADB, PATU, CAPT, UNTNA, ITU and UNESCO is to meet soon to formulate the terms of reference for the detailed study and undertake other tasks connected with the operative para. 7 of its recommendations (annex I).

Meeting on Appropriate Modern Telecommunications Technology for Integrated Rural Development in Africa

Recommendations

The intergovernmental experts meeting/seminar held at Addis Ababa from 22 to 26 March 1982 for the purpose of examining the pre-feasibility report on the application of Appropriate Modern Telecommunications Technology for Integrated Rural Development in Africa (AMTT/IRD)

1) Noting the information supplied by members of the Steering Committee on the genesis of the AMTT/IRD and AFROSAT projects namely UNTACDA projects TAP-05 (Survey of rural telecommunications) and SAP-01 (African Regional Satellite Communications);

2) Recalling the relevant resolutions passed by various intergovernmental bodies, particularly the OAU resolutions CM/Res/506 (XXVII), CM/Res. 754 (XXXIII) Rev.1 CM/Res. 813(XXXV), the ECA Conference of Ministers resolutions 278/XII, 281/XII, 310/XIII, the recommendations 12 and 1 of the 3rd African Conference of Telecommunications Administrations, the PATU Plenipotentiary Conference resolution 28/CPL/82/Res.08, the Conference of African Ministers of Transport, Communications and Planning TRA/UNTACDA/Res.81/17;

3) Considering the contents of the Executive Summary and the background report on the AMTT/IRD Pre-feasibility Study supplemented by the presentations made and explanations offered by the international experts who worked on the study;

4) Cognizant of the work of the PATU Committee of 11 on the preliminary study of an African Regional Satellite Communications System;

5. Noting with satisfaction the information provided by OAU and ECA that the Commission of the European Community and the European Countries which currently support the AMTT/IRD, AFSAT and AFROSAT studies are ready to consider the Regional Project which will result from the merger of the AMTT/IRD, AFSAT and AFROSAT projects;

6. Considering the existence of a preliminary study sponsored by the UAPT which has examined the needs of a certain number of countries with the view to defining an African Regional Satellite System;

7. Recommends the creation of an Interagency Co-ordination Committee composed of the following members: OAU, ECA, ADB, PATU (Technical Secretariat) UAPT, URTNA, ITU and UNESCO, and having the following responsibilities:

(a) to harmonize and integrate all on-going Pre-feasibility study projects and activities such as AMTT/IRD, AFROSAT and AFSAT in order to make one single study on appropriate telecommunications for the development of Africa,

(b) the formulation of the terms of reference of the study mentioned in (a) above for the feasibility phase and the description of the modality of its execution. The terms of reference should include the provision of telecommunication services, including radio and TV broadcasting, for interurban and intra-African connection, it should lay special emphasis on the provision of services to rural and remote areas where the majority of the population lives;

(c) to contact bilateral donors and multilateral financing institutions to finance the study;

(d) to circulate necessary documentation along with appropriate recommendation to African governments to obtain their individual views and ensure their interest in participating in the project;

(e) further recommends that African governments should examine the feasibility study project proposals and express their interest in participation indicating the high priority action to be taken on the project for its rapid implementation within the Decade Programme; and

(f) that bilateral donors and multilateral financing institutions should be invited to provide their assistance in a harmonized and complimentary manner so as to avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources;

8. Requests the Executive Secretary of ECA to bring these recommendations to the attention of the next Conference of Ministers of ECA to be held in April 1982 in Tripoli, Libya for consideration and endorsement;

9. Further requests the Secretary-General of the OAU to present a comprehensive report on the implementation of this recommendation to the 39th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers for consideration and make appropriate recommendations to the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments for endorsement.